



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman John Katko (R-NY) Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security

“Innovations in Security: Examining the Use of Canines”

October 3, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

Canines are an essential asset to our national security. Due to their intelligence, superior sense of smell, and versatility, canines provide an unparalleled service to law enforcement.

When canines’ natural abilities are supplemented by selective breeding, training, and cutting-edge developments in science, they become one of the most effective security tools for public safety. While the utility of one certain technology over another does ebb and flow based on how terrorists seek to do harm, the security benefit of canines will always be a crucial element to keeping Americans safe.

The concept of a working dog is not unfamiliar to most Americans: They are a visible presence in airports, train stations, and other public areas.

From my experience as Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee’s Subcommittee on Transportation and Protective Security, I have seen firsthand the data proving the security effectiveness of canines in mitigating the rapidly evolving threat landscape facing America’s transportation systems.

Oftentimes, canines present the most effective and efficient means of detecting new threats, as they can be retrained and deployed as new threat streams and terrorist tactics emerge. Canines are utilized in a variety of different settings and roles for the detection of people, narcotics, explosives, and weapons of mass destruction, amongst many other items.

As we strive to be proactive in mitigating threats to the traveling public in transit hubs, airports, and other venues, canines are an essential component of our ability to enhance security.

Because of their versatility and reliability, canines are increasingly sought after by federal, state, local, and tribal agencies, private stakeholders, and foreign governments.

This spike in demand for canines both domestically and internationally outstrips our current ability to produce an adequate supply of dogs. The United States is competing with many other nations to procure canines that meet rigorous standards, and a shortage of quality dogs presents an impending security risk.

In an era of heightened terrorist activity, it is critical that the domestic working canine industry has a robust development and training pipeline that feeds into a seamless procurement process.

The purpose of today's hearing is to learn more about the challenges that the canine industry currently faces. We also want to ascertain how we can better develop a stronger and more reliable infrastructure of domestic breeders and training facilities.

Lastly, we want to learn how the United States government can better communicate its needs with its private sector canine partners to help facilitate future growth of this essential security asset. A strong domestic breeding industry not only makes all of us safer, but creates new jobs and opportunities in our communities.

However, we have to make sure our government is doing everything it can to present a strategic and comprehensive vision for its canine needs, and that this vision is effectively communicated to industry in order to foster necessary growth.

We must also ensure that with the rapid increase in demand for canines, we are ensuring the quality of our security standards and procuring only the most highly trained canines. We must also ensure that we are properly incentivizing breeders and trainers to meet the demand for canines today and in the future.

I encourage all of our witnesses today to be candid in your testimony. We convened this hearing in order to hear directly from each of you about how Congress can better support this critical layer of our national security. We all share the same goals, and we all want to better understand what obstacles currently exist that may prevent the growth of our domestic canine industry. Canines are an invaluable safety and security asset, and the need for more canine teams will only continue to grow.

I would like to thank my colleagues Chairman Palmer, Ranking Member Demings and Ranking Member Watson Coleman for joining me in calling for this hearing today.

Security is not a partisan issue, and we must work together in a bipartisan fashion to advance important issues that affect the safety and security of all Americans.

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